

**Class Secretary/Head Class Agent:**

Pete Miller, pmiller@aimmedia.com

I'm sticking with my "Missing in Action" (MIA) theme by reporting on the whereabouts of **Bruce MacLean**. You remember Bruce as a close friend of **Jack Coe** and the Congdon House roommate of **Bill Waldron** and **Miguel Castillo**. Bruce went missing from Taft after a raucous stayover in June 1971 and never looked back. Bruce grew up in Waterbury. He could have been a day boy but, with his older siblings already out of the house, he wanted out, too. So, he boarded at Taft for three years, lower mid through upper mid year. **John Esty** did not invite him back for our senior year. Like so many MIA boys in the summer of '71, his departure made room for the girls in the fall. "Those were tumultuous times," Bruce explained. "There was acid rock music—and acid. One late night, Jack Coe and I donned our backpacks and hitchhiked to Boston. We wound up at Harvard in **Woody Chase '69's** dorm room. He told us to go back to Taft, where we got busted by **Oscie**." After Taft, Bruce matriculated at New Hampton School in New Hampshire, where "wonder and well-being unite." Bruce describes it as a hippie school much like the college he attended after that, Prescott, in Arizona. After a year off from college, our protagonist ended up at UMass Amherst, where he graduated with an interest in landscape architecture. This took him to Cape Cod, where he began building houses while also playing lead guitar and singing in rock bands around the Cape and Nantucket. This man can sing! Check out his You Tube video called "Far North Again" where his whiskey voice belts out an on-the-road country song. Bruce has spent some time south of the border where he was the band leader and lead performer at the Continental in Naples, Florida, an upscale supper club. There he played classic rock for the generation that grew up with it. Reeling through the years, Bruce has survived the volatile home building business, a heart



Former Class of '72 member Bruce MacLean takes a beat, waterside.

attack, and two wives. He has two kids—Sam, who works at Harvard, and Stephanie, who's in school earning her master's in social work. Bruce is reunited with a girlfriend from his youth. He recalls Miguel Castillo meeting his future wife, Kim, while visiting him on Cape Cod, the summer of '71. Unlike other MIAs from the Class of 1972, Bruce does not disavow his Taft experience. There is no lingering bitterness in his memory, only a fondness expressed for the friends he made there: Bill Waldron, **Bob Golfman**, Jack Coe, Miguel Castillo, **Taylor Rockwell**, **Peter Byerly**, **Bill Blanning** and **Whit Gray**. Those he hasn't seen, he asked about. If there was trauma back then, it was the real trauma so many of us felt about Bill Waldron's death. Bruce explained it, "We were young—none of had ever known someone who had died. Bill was our ringleader and very close friend." Over the phone, Bruce and I exchanged thoughts about turning 70. But 56 years after I first met Bruce on the fourth floor of HDT, me playing corridor hockey and him playing the guitar, we picked up where we left off and chuckled about our shared memories. If you saw Bruce now, you'd recognize the same long, wavy hair and oversized glasses. "I'm 70," he said, "but I still act like a teenager."

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It wasn't exactly a public relations book tour for **Jack Coe's** new memoir, *Impossible to Believe*. But when Jack's book was published by Breakneck Hill Press in May 2024, Jack rallied some of the characters in his book, old Taft friends, to commemorate his 324-page paperback, available on Amazon. On Cape Cod in September, with Jack as the guest of honor, **Bruce MacLean** hosted a mini-Taft reunion for seven classmates you've not heard from lately: **Miguel Castillo, Alex "Sandy" Dominick, Bruce Harvey, Mark "Taco" Robinson, Jack Coe, and Peter Byerly**. Books and music were the theme of this weekend retreat. **Alex Dominick** wrote a book, too. You will recall me plugging his literary accomplishments in these class notes a few years ago. He found a diary belonging to his father, Pete Dominick, in his mother's attic. Senator Dominick had recorded his experience as a WWII pilot flying cargo planes "over the hump" in China, so Alex wrote a book about it. **Taco** and **Jack** brought their guitars, and **Bruce** had his (he plays in a band around Cape Cod). **Harve** brought his harmonicas. It was a music festival! It is fitting that the generation who grew up with the British music invasion, who blared Led Zeppelin and Jimi Hendrix LPs in HDT, would—52 years later—be jamming together to the same music. "Bruce was a fantastic host!" exclaimed Alex. "He shepherded us around to several music venues and treated us to a gig with his band, Link Montana and the Rough Riders."

**Peter Byerly** had been on my mind as another MIA whom I'd not talked to since graduation. So I called him to catch up and get his take on this gathering. Peter told me, "Our year, 1972, was significant in the history of Taft. We saw the light-speed transition from the old 'Mr. Chips' English boarding school, with coats and ties and mandatory chapel to college-style classes, girls, and recreational drugs, lots of it. Looking back, I think a lot of us were confused about a lot of things. We still are!" You will recall Peter as a lower profile character around campus than his roommate for three years, **John Taft**. He was one of **John Small's** cross-country disciples and a member of the Masque and Dagger. Unlike many of his friends, **Peter's** tricks went unpunished, so he graduated with his class after four years at the school. Nowadays, Peter is a principal in Beacon Architectural Associates where he designs public libraries and boutique hotels. His expertise with structures carries over to his personal life: he is the keeper of beehives. He is married to Naomi Finegold, has a daughter Zoe, and two stepchildren. He lives in Dorchester, Massachusetts. Whatever ambivalent feelings this merry band have about Taft, their friendships are unequivocal. **Bruce MacLean** put it this way, "The years quickly melted away, and we had a great time together. Despite anything bad that happened, Taft was great because of the friends I made there. I hope the present-day students enjoy the same camaraderie."